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January 23, 1958

Mr. Jackie Robinson
425 Lexington Avenue
New York 17, New York

Dear Jackie:

I wish to express my appreciation for your letter of December 24 emphasizing the need for continued progress in the field of civil rights.

First of all, I want to assure you that there is no intention on the part of the Administration to discontinue its wholehearted efforts to achieve the goal of human dignity and equality of opportunity for all Americans.

As you know, the battle for equal rights, in which we are both so interested, has many different and yet related aspects. When Bill Rogers indicated that the Administration did not intend to press for additional civil rights legislation in this current session of Congress, his statement by no means meant that there was any intention of relaxing our efforts to reach the ultimate objective of equal opportunities for all our citizens.

The civil rights legislation which was adopted after long debate and much opposition during the last session was the first in 82 years. At a time when every bit of support was needed to achieve a stronger bill, there was, as you will recall, disagreement among and lack of support from many individuals and groups which previously had been most vocal in this struggle. That is one of the reasons why there appears to be little possibility that additional civil rights legislation could be enacted in the present session.

This realistic appraisal, however, does not mean that we should become discouraged. Although the Act passed by the Congress was considerably weaker than that originally proposed by the President, its passage was an important milestone in American history.

Robinson, Jackie

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I do not believe our citizens will have an opportunity to appraise properly this epochal action until the Civil Rights Commission is sufficiently organized to enforce the provisions of the Act. I think you will agree that it would be well to know how effective the present law is going to be before attempting to pass further legislation.

Another aspect of the total problem which I know you recognize is that the activities of the Civil Rights Commission will serve as an educational process in winning wider acceptance of civil rights legislation generally.

While all great movements of reform started slowly and encountered bitter opposition, they soon gathered an irresistible momentum and gained rapid acceptance. I fervently believe this will be the case in the battle for equal rights.

Incidentally, may I express my deep appreciation for your generous public comments on my work in this field. I hope we can continue to work together for our common objective.

With kind regards,

Sincerely,

Richard Nixon